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Dominican Republic

AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY ANNUAL

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Report Highlights:

The Dominican Republic ratified the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol in 2006. The UNEP provided funds to assist the Dominican Government with drafting the biosafety law. The draft law has moved to one of the two chambers (Dominican Senate) for approval. There are no biotechnology crops being grown in the country.

Section I. Executive Summary:

The Dominican Republic is a strong market for U.S. feed grains, oilseeds and processed food products from the United States. Due to this demand, we would not expect that the government would implement legislation that would jeopardize the livestock industry.

Section II. Biotechnology Trade and Production:

a) Biotechnology crops: The Dominican Republic (DR) does not produce any genetically modified crops and there are no crops under development that would be in the market in the coming years. The country relies on U.S. corn and soybean products for the animal feed industry.

b) Biotechnology Research Efforts: Low-tech tissue culture, a biotechnology reproduction technique, has made a

significant contribution to the progress of specific areas of the Dominican agricultural production. Over a dozen crops have been reproduced using this method, thereby facilitating their commercial exploitation. *In vitro* culture has also facilitated the introduction of PHIA varieties of *Musaceae* from Honduras, which are resistant to Black Sigatoka.

c) Biotechnology crops under development: There are currently no biotechnology crops under development nor anticipated any new developments in the coming year.

d) Biotechnology product use: The Dominican Republic relies on coarse grains and soybean products from the United States for their animal feed production. As a consequence, the poultry and swine industry, and to a lesser extent, the dairy industry all rely on U.S. products for their livestock development and commercial output through imported feed ingredients. In the food processing industry, the Dominican Republic relies partially on U.S. soybean, sunflower and corn oil for their needs. The U.S. remains as the best reliable supplier because of proximity, quality and price.

The following table presents U.S. exports on selected items:

Selected U.S. Exports to the Dominican Republic CY 2008	
Commodity	Total Exports Value (In thousands of \$)
Coarse grains	251,512
Cotton	881
Soybean Meal	146,942
Soybean Oil	50,456
Other Vegetable Oils	14,025
Total	463,816

Source: Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics

e) Food aid: The country has not been recipient of food aid except in the case of emergencies such as hurricanes. However a Food for Education program was implemented several years ago and in 2009 a Food for Progress Program was granted. In none of these programs, biotechnology has not, nor is anticipated to be an issue in the country's acceptance of these programs.

f) Biotechnology crops: The country does not produce nor export biotechnology crops. Practically all biotechnology crops used originate from the United States.

Section III. New Technologies:

There are no new technologies evolving in the research arena, nor agricultural products nor animal products under development for commercialization in the Dominican Republic.

There is no public awareness on emerging technologies related to food and agriculture except some negative press expressing awareness of the dramatic increase of international prices for feed and feed ingredients. GODR officials and private sector are aware of the current benefits of GMO crops and we expect this trend to continue.

Section IV. Biotechnology Policy:

Because of the lack of a regulatory framework, there are no biotechnology crops currently approved for direct consumption, processing, or animal feed. The DR currently does not plan to develop GMO seeds. However, concerns about the technology and its coexistence with organic farming exist. **The DR currently exports organic crops (bananas, coffee, cocoa) to the European Union and has plans to market such products to the United States.**

The Dominican market consumes corn and soybean products almost exclusively from the United States.

c) Biotechnology testing

The Ministry of Agriculture, Plant Health Division may allow testing for biotechnology crops under supervision of IDIAF. There have been no biotechnology crops being tested during the last year and currently there are no plans for the near future.

Plant Health officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment try to participate in international standard-setting bodies when they have availability of funds. This is not a common practice.

d) Labeling

The DR does not currently require labeling on GMO ingredients or content in processed products. General labeling requirements on prepackaged foods is controlled by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and is regulated by a sub-division of the Bureau of Norms and Standards (DIGENOR).

General labeling requirements are as follows: NORDOM 53, which is in place and it is partially enforced since early 2008, follows the *Codex Alimentarius* standard and should be in Spanish language. Details are described in the Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards report (DR7014), available on the Foreign Agricultural Service website.

e) Trade Barriers

The Dominican Republic has a rule in place, which requires, for import purposes that the phytosanitary certificate for corn states that it “does not contain GMO material”. Nonetheless the Plant Health officials are aware of this but it has not been enforced since it became a requirement several years ago. In addition, the country has no possibility of producing the quantities of corn and soybean products required by the domestic industry (over 1.5 million tons, most of it imported from the United States).

In principle, the draft legislation to implement the Cartagena Protocol has the potential to affect trade in products that contain GMOs since the issue of traceability and labeling are part of this agreement. The Biotechnology Security draft law went through a revision within the Ministry of Environment in mid 2008 and is currently under revision at the Environmental and Natural Resources Commission at the Dominican Senate. The Dominican Senate is currently involved in revising the Constitution. As a result, the Biosecurity, Biodiversity, Coastal and Marine law proposal will need to wait until the revision is complete. We will have further details when the document becomes available.

Section V. Marketing:

President Fernandez in a July 17, 2008 speech stated, as an ingredient in food security, that “... the use of GMOs to increase yields and quality of crops is necessary”. Shortly after, two non GMO activist groups, Galia Tropical and FUNDECOM (Pro-Consumer Foundation) refuted the statement but apparently were not successful in initiating a new active campaign against these products.

Section VI. Capacity Building and Outreach:

In 2003, State Department brought a guest speaker to do a presentation on Biotechnology in Santo Domingo. A year later, in 2004, through the Cochran Fellowship Program, two university professors received training in this area at Michigan State University. Furthermore, a Latin American forum in biotechnology took place in the DR in 2004 where

the scientist in the region discussed, among other topics, GMO applications and use.

The Superior Agriculture Institute (ISA) and the CEDAF are evaluating the possibility of a biotechnology Masters Degree program in the Dominican Republic. In June 2007, a poultry and swine association (APORCI) inaugurated, an applied low-tech biotechnology waste management project, six bio-digesters for biogas and organic fertilizer production. Its construction and operation was sponsored by USAID grant and the Ministry of the Environment. The project was estimated at US\$150,000.

Our office is aware that some swine producers have invested in bio-digesters for contaminant control and energy generation with limited success.

Section VII. Author Defined:

Anon. NORDOM 53, Dirección General de Normas y Control de Calidad, Secretaría de Estado Industria y Comercio, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 2002.

Perez, Rufino. Biotechnology in the Dominican Republic: Perspectives and Opportunities, ALIMENTEC,S.A. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, June 2005.

Ministry of the Environment and Wildlife has several rules, Procedures and Standards in Place. None of them relate to biotechnology.

Law 358-05 dated November 2005 on Consumer Rights as regard to food security, makes reference to GMOs in its article 74, with the precautionary principle.

The initial agricultural and livestock framework for biosecurity was developed by Ana Maria Peralta Ottonello in March 2003 (available upon request). The draft of the proposed law on biosafety was developed under the World Environmental Fund (FMAN) and implemented by Environment UN Program (PNUMA) is the basis for the proposed law. The original daft is available upon request, although a copy of the draft document submitted to the Senate is not yet available.
